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ABSTRACT

This report presents an overview and evaluation of activities conducted at West Los Angeles College in operating the college's Transfer Opportunity Program. First, the report outlines the program's objectives, which included expanding the identification of potential transfer students; reducing transfer shock through the use of mentor/counselors and support materials; and developing a multi-discipline general education course involving problem solving, and a combination of business management, sociology, and psychology. Next, the report presents 13 activities specified in the project proposal and evaluates the college's success in achieving them. These activities included identifying feeder schools and universities to participate in the program; identifying students to participate in the program; organizing and implementing a training program for mentor/counselors; assigning the mentors/counselors to the students; beginning to videotape university and college lectures; arranging for live visits to lectures and scheduling seminars to discuss lectures and problems; developing support material for the Learning Resources Center and Computer Assisted Instruction office; working with faculty to develop the new general education course; and implementing evaluation procedures. The report concludes with some final thoughts on the overall program and on plans to incorporate the program into the regular college program. (HB)

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WEST LOS ANGELES COLLEGE

TRANSFER OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM

Report to the Ford Foundation

WEST LOS ANGELES COLLEGE

June 1984

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REPORT TO THE FORD FOUNDATION

We at West Los Angeles College are pleased to submit this report on our first year's activities in the Transfer Opportunity Program. Although the program got off to a late start--due largely to the problems attendant to the central organizational structure of the Los Angeles Community College District, and also the fiscal restraints caused by the funding problems of California's community colleges--we feel that we have made progress in establishing systems to improve transfer education. Many valuable contacts were made with both West Los Angeles College's feeder high schools and with the University of California, Los Angeles. The program, its goals, objectives, and processes met with an enthusiastic response from these institutions. We made many mistakes in this first year, and learned from them. We made many changes along the way as better means of accomplishing our objectives were found. And we plan for future changes next year. Through the process of experiment and refinement, we believe that West Los Angeles College's Transfer Opportunities Program will emerge as one of the outstanding programs in our community.

Before beginning discussion of program specifics, it would perhaps be helpful if we were to give an overview of the project and its three major objectives and make general comments on our experiences with the program.

Our first objective was to expand identification of potential transfer students. This proved to be a more time consuming element than originally anticipated. Although we had excellent cooperation from the feeder high schools, particularly the counseling staffs, it is apparent that high school procedures require a two month lead time in order to select the

the students we desired. Our emphasis was on the student who is capable of baccalaureate level work but is lacking motivation, self-confidence, or knowledge of the long-range advantages of a college education. These are the students most affected by "academic shock." These are not the students who come regularly to the attention of the counselors, i.e. the strongly motivated, obviously college-bound young person or the trouble maker. Consequently, a deeper search and more counseling time is required in the high schools.

A similar problem affects the community colleges where over three quarters of the new students do not have a clear educational goal. In both cases, the problem can be solved with more time since the techniques used seemed to work once the proper student sample had been identified.

Our second objective was to reduce scholastic shock through the use of:

1) mentor/counselors from West Los Angeles College providing services to high school students

2) UCLA students providing similar services to West Los Angeles College students, and

3) videotaped lectures and support materials for use in small group discussions.

This was the focus of the majority of our efforts this year. And our results were mixed. Problems in the West Los Angeles College mentor/counselor program can be largely attributed to the inherent problems in any large bureaucracy, insufficient management, and over-delegation of authority, rather than to any lack of enthusiasm on the part of program participants. As a result, we made several substantive changes to the UCLA mentor section of the program, and althrough the UCLA program was begun late in the year, and in a form considerably altered from its original, it has proved very successful both in terms of overall ease of

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We have moved away from our initial interest in the production of audio-visual materials to greater focus on projects aimed at direct people participation. Therefore, rather than videotape college lectures, we have provided opportunities for students to actually participate in college and university courses. The use of videotape however, has proved very useful to the mentor training process with videotaped student/mentor sessions used as training aids.

The third objective, development of a multi-discipline general education course was delayed by the unexpected lengthy illness of a participant which required us to make a change in direction. The development process is now underway with plans for offering the course during the 1984-85 academic year.

The course is a problem solving, creative thinking-oriented combination of business management, sociology, and psychology. It will bear credit towards the social science general education requirements and will be team-taught by the developers. The college hopes to make it a model for course development. It is also planned to try to schedule future TOP participants into this and similar courses.

We have organized this report to discuss in turn each of the stated activities as outlined in our original proposal. We will restate the original activity as it appeared, followed by a discussion of our achievements to date, changes made in the level or type of activity, and plans for institutionalizing those activities that have proved most beneficial. We will conclude with an analysis of the overall program, our plans to incorporate the program into the regular college program, and new directions for the future.

Activity #1: Identify three feeder high schools and two universities, and secure their commitment to participate in the program.

Three feeder high schools, Dorsey, Crenshaw, and Culver High, all with high minority populations, agreed to participate in the program. UCLA also agreed to participation, however, due to the late start of the program, it was decided that the inclusion of a second four-year college

would be overly ambitious, and plans to incorporate California State University, Dominguez Hills were postponed although the university indicated an interest in future activities.

> Activity #2: Establish the process for identifying students to participate in the program within appropriate counseling and administrative areas of West Los Angeles College and the feeder high schools, and explore the use of Project Access to identify and track these students.

The initial process, both at the high schools and the college involved counselor participation. Since high school counselors do not have regular contact with every student, it was necessary to make an extensive review of student records, consult faculty, consider possible students in counselor discussions, and finally involve both college and high school personnel meeting with each individual student. Because of the time involved, the semester had already begun before the initial selection was completed. It was decided to admit these students and test them "after the fact." Testing did confirm the results, but ideally should be used as part of the basic selection process.

The process was somewhat similar at the college where assessment of all new students is required under Project Access (a testing and skills development program established a year ago). It still required counselor time to analyze test results, compare them with student goals, and hold the necessary individual conferences.

With sufficient lead time, we feel that we can overcome these difficulties.

Activity #3: Complete the identification of 32 to 40 West Los Angeles College students and an equal number of high school students in the eleventh and twelfth grades who meet the basic requirements and have the commitment towards completion of a baccalaureate degree.

Selection of high school students was handled through the high school counseling staff, who were most cooperative. Each school identified 12 students (total 36) who met the following criteria:

1) students should be high school juniors or seniors

2) students should have college potential but lack clear focus on whether they should attend college, or which college they should attend.

3) students should be neither over or under achievers. Rather, they should fall into that vast middle ground of students who frequently fail to receive proper academic, personal, and vocational guidance from overworked administrative and counseling staffs.

It would appear that our initial objective of the identification of 32 to 40 West Los Angeles College students was overly ambitious for the first year of this program. We did not take into accurate consideration the time restraints placed on students as they attempt to juggle job, school, and family responsibilities. However, we did get off to a good start with the identification of eight West Los Angeles College students interested in transferring to UCLA.

Activity #4: Identify from University and West Los Angeles College honors programs 16 student mentor/counselors. The University mentor/counselors will be assigned to work with college student participants while those from West Los Angeles College will work with high school participants.

After looking at the composition of the West Los Angeles College honors program (most of the participants being white, middle age, middle-class

women) we decided that this group was perhaps not the best to provide "peer" counseling to high school students. Therefore, in addition to the honors students, younger minority student participation was also solicited. Initially, 17 West Los Angeles College students were identified by the counseling department of which 12 were chosen to serve as mentors. Unfortunately, shortly after the program was started, several mentors were disqualified because of a change in the Los Angeles Community College District policy which required that students employed by the District, including specially funded programs, had to be enrolled in at least 12 units. By the end of the year, due to this and other forms of attrition, only eight mentors remained serving 20 high school students.

Again, having decided that it was not in our students' best interests to provide them with UCLA honors students, eleven students were identified by UCLA as potential mentors. Of these, seven voiced interest in the project and four were hired. As we feared that late implementation of the project would not allow for a quality experience, we decided to alter the UCLA component of the program to provide students with an opportunity to participate in an open forum, and in tours of the UCLA campus. The forum, which took place on May 31 permitted West Los Angeles College students to meet informally with the UCLA students. Each of the UCLA students had developed an expertise in some aspect of life at UCLA that would be of value to West Los Angeles College students, sush as grading practices at the unversity. The presentations made by the UCLA students served as a basis for discussions and information exchanges between the UCLA students and West Los Angeles College students.

Activity #5: Organize and implement a one to two week training program for the mentor/counselors. A college counselor will be assigned on an hourly basis to train, assign, and schedule the mentor/counselors. He/she will also plan to meet with them regularly to guide them in their work.

Early in the program it was decided that due to the late start it was important to get the mentors working with their students as quickly as possible. Therefore, the formal two-week training session was shortened to two evening sessions. The counselor (mentor supervisor) met with the mentors throughout the program to provide guidance. Meetings were conducted on a one-to-one basis as needed, and on a regular group basis once a week for two hours.

Activity #6: Assign the mentor/counselors to a group of three to five student participants, each group having similar interests or directions.

West Los Angeles College mentors were typically assigned a case load of four students. However, after the loss of some of the mentors, a certain amount of reshuffling went on so that mentors did not always have students with similar interests. Since in most cases the relationships between mentors and students were one-on-one rather than group, and because the case load per mentor was gradually reduced due to attrition, it was ultimately deemed less essential for assignments to be made solely on the basis of mutual interests than to maintain the continuity of support. Flexibility in the assignment seemed to have less of a negative impact than we had expected.

Activity #7: Begin videotaping university and college lectures.

As mentioned earlier, we discussed videotaping college and university

lectures and decided that live visits would ultimately be of greater value to the students. With that in mind, and with the feeling that students would benefit far more from actual participation, a college course, Business Data Processing 1 was provided to interested high school students. Not only did the course provide students with an experience of the environment and rigors of college, but perhaps even more importantly, high school students were given the opportunity to increase their own self-esteem through the concrete accomplishment of actually taking a college-level course and succeeding in it.

One problem we encountered as we were developing the course and which we successfully dealt with was the necessity of providing transportation to and from the high schools, particularly for students returning to high crime areas after dark. We were able to make arrangements for the use of the college van used in the transport of handicapped students. Although the transportation problems resulted in an initial low enrollment of nine students, only two dropped the class, and after the van transportation was added, attendance was excellent. We plan to continue such course offerings in the future, although not necessarily the same course,

Activity #8: Arrange for live visits to university and college lectures.

The UCLA program included the provision for students to make arrangements with the UCLA mentors for any or all of the following:

1) The "Grand Tour" of the UCLA campus. Two of the UCLA participants had previous experience in conducting students through the vast UCLA complex and provided this service to interested students.

2) The "Mini Tour" allowed students interested in transferring to a specific program to be taken around by one of the UCLA students to view the buildings in which the student would be taking classes, to meet with faculty members, and to become familiar with the attendant facilities such as libraries and parking that were specific to the student's major.

3. A Day at UCLA allowed interested students to spend a day with one of the UCLA students as the student attended classes, met with friends, and generally went about the business of being a UCLA student.

Activity #9: Schedule regular small group seminars to discuss lectures, problems, and ways to improve.

Time was only available for one small group seminar, UCLA: A Personal View (mentioned earlier in this report). The forum provided students from West Los Angeles College with an opportunity to meet with UCLA students to get basic information on such topics as dealing with the bureaucracy, time management, and student services. The forum was very well presented with a practical approach to college utilizing the personal experiences of the UCLA students and was very well received by attendees. This will definitely be a continuing part of the program.

Activity #10: Develop and install appropriate support material in the Learning Resources Center and in the Computer Assisted Instruction Office.

The program utilized already established services to implement their area. This included an extensive tutoring service, self-paced instructional materials in text, video, and audio forms, a drop-in reading laboratory with extensive material resources, and a similar writing laboratory. In addition, video presentations on orientation to college are available along with previously recorded faculty lectures in various subjects.

Activity 11: Work with faculty groups to determine the scope and area of a new interdisciplinary general education course.

Activity 12: Select and assign faculty to develop the course. Plan the scheduling and implementation of the course for fall semester, 1984.

The original intent was to produce a course emphasizing critical thinking and problem solving using three subject areas which would help develop students' ability to integrate and synthesize different areas in arriving at solutions. The intent was maintained although the original faculty group had to have its membership altered due to the lengthy illness of a key instructor. In addition, faculty interest was inhibited by a difficult year of cutbacks and layoffs. Finally, a group consisting of faculty from business management, sociology, and psychology has begun to develop the course which will investigate the impact of business on society and the individual. The course, carrying social science credit, will be offered during the 1984-85 academic year.

Activity #13: Implement evaluation procedures. These will include individual surveys of all participating students and mentor/counselors as well as faculty and counselors working with the students. These surveys will be taken at the end of each semester. At the same time, written comments will be requested from appropriate university and high school administrators and counselors. Emphasis will be on the assistance for and improvement and retention of the participating students as well as directions for improving the program.

West Los Angeles College mentors prepared a narrative report on the program as part of their regular duties. In essence, the mentors believed that they were helpful to the studetns, however, they voiced concerns that the lateness of the program's start-up caused some students' attrition before things really got properly underway. This feeling was echoed by the high school counselors who's feedback was solicited by direct phone contact, it having been determined that at the end of the school year we were unlikely to receive written comments in a timely manner. The counselors were very positive about the program. However, one was concerned that only minorities had been

permitted to participate (which was never our intention), and one other counselor felt that they had not been given sufficient time to develop an accurate list of appropriate students for the program. One other counselor indicated that the selection criteria were unclear. It therefore appears that in the future, greater efforts will have to be made to provide the high school counselors with adequate time to select participating students and to more clearly articulate the program's objectives and criteria.

We see no difficulty in correcting these problems, and all counselors agreed that they would like to see the program continued.

West Los Angeles College students who participated in the UCLA: A Personal View forum and in the campus tours were provided with a combination of written and verbal survey instruments to determine if they had found the program to be useful. They were extremely positive about the program and requested that it be continued next semester so that some of their friends could be involved.

UCLA student participants were provided with a formal questionnaire. They also were very enthusiastic about the program, although they were disappointed that the end of the school year required the program's early termination.

Unfortunatly, as of the date of this report, due to the current unavailability of records, we have been unable to contact any of the high school students who participated in the program. This inability on our part has lead to some heavy introspection on the need to maintain accurate and detailed records in the program office as well as with the mentor supervisor, again a problem that in the future can be easily rectified. We will continue to persue the collection of student responses.

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

To be successful, the mentoring program will require a much tighter supervisory and administrative control, and a large number of hours on the part of the supervisor. With this in mind, we have determined that short-term programs on the order of the UCLA program should be expanded as we feel that they have the potential of reaching more students in a cost-effective manner. We feel the mentoring program has been successful if smaller than had been hoped. It will still be a major component in future years but with more refined systems and timelines of identification of students and assignment of mentors. This short-term project has enabled us to sort out and address a variety of bureaucratic, management, procedural, and educational problems. The mentoring combined with the very effective program developed with the UCLA students and directrd towards both high school and entering college students should do much to meet the goals of the Transfer Opportunity Program. Involvement with more high schools and senior institutions will also prove beneficial.

One further possibility that we will explore with the four-year schools is combining our efforts to send a team of West Los Angeles College and UCLA and/or California State College, Dominguez Hills students to feeder high schools so that high school students might get some idea of the difference in the range of demands and services available--thus aiding students to make an intelligent choice of which college to attend.

This has been a truly educational process for the college and the high school students and mentors. It has also been worth while for opening a number of doors and minds. The program has been generally successful for, although the means have been necessarily changed where necessary, the ends have remained the same.

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